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THE SAN FRANCISCO LABOR MOVEMENT IN 1901.

THE great struggle in the summer of 1901 between the employers and the workmen in San Francisco was one of peculiar significance. The principles at issue were of fundamental importance to our industrial system, and they were clearly stated and distinctly recognized on each side; both parties to the struggle were effectively organized and skillfully managed; the strategy adopted and the weapons used were of a strictly economic nature; the distance from other populous centers prevented any considerable interference from without; and the struggle was fought to a finish. No other strike of recent years discloses to us so clearly the principles of our labor unions, the methods they adopt and the obstacles they encounter. On this ground, even if there were no other, the conflict would be worthy of careful study. But a vastly enhanced interest is lent it by the fact that during the shock, recoil and subsequent *mêlée* of the contending parties there developed a remarkable political movement that resulted in giving to the labor unions the control of the city government.

Nowhere in the United States has the prosperity of the past few years smiled more benignly than in San Francisco. The annexation of Hawaii and the occupation of the Philippines, the establishment in the state of many new industries and the almost unprecedented growth of old ones, the formation of new commercial connections with Alaska and the Orient and the improvement of the means of communication with these regions, the increase of the expenditures made in the city by the federal government since the outbreak of the late war, the extension to the city of another transcontinental railroad, easier communication by rail with the interior counties, notably with counties on the southern coast, — all these things have contributed to widen the field for business operations, and the energy of the people has not been unequal to the opportunity.

During the same period, investment and enterprise have been restrained by no great shock to the feeling of security. Failures of business houses have been few and their influence confined within narrow limits. The banks have been sound and confidence in them apparently unbounded. No important strike occurred to stop the wheels of industry and delay the fulfillment of contracts. Money has been easy, the retail business has been brisk and all who wanted it found ready employment. Recovery from the stagnation and business depression that marked the years from 1893 to 1896 was rapid and complete.

In the benefits of this commercial and industrial revival the share of the wage earners has been large. Seven years ago the streets of the city were full of idle men waiting to be hired at almost any price. Even for those that still had employment the hours of work were shortened and wages were lowered. When the tide turned, all this idle labor was absorbed. Then wages began to rise, first in isolated cases, afterwards almost universally ; so that "at present," reports the California Labor Bureau in 1900, "demands for more pay and fewer hours are heard in all directions, and in most cases the demands are granted." In the accounts of the savings banks, the most sensitive test of the workingman's welfare, the story of this improvement is told in no uncertain accents. During 1894, \$97,496,712 were deposited in these banks, while no less than \$104,155,474 were withdrawn from them. In 1899 the amount deposited already exceeded the amount withdrawn by \$5,705,411; and in the subsequent years the favorable balance became still greater. At the beginning of last year,¹ therefore, it was possible to say : "The condition of the wage earner in California compares well with the condition of the wage earner in any other place. . . . In almost every avocation he is better paid than elsewhere, while in general the number of hours he is required to work is no greater. . . . In San Francisco wages are higher than in any other part of the state." Such were the conclusions of the California Bureau of Labor, the whole staff of which was appointed by the present governor from amongst the laborers themselves.

¹ This article was written in January, 1902.

Now it is a very noteworthy fact that this improvement in the condition of the working classes was accompanied by a remarkably strong tendency to the formation of labor unions. Throughout the state during 1896 only three unions had been formed; seven others came into existence in 1897, and only two in 1898; while in 1899 the number of new ones organized reached twenty-five. The tendency grew constantly stronger in the following year, especially in San Francisco, and in December it received both stimulus and guidance through the arrival of a professional "organizer" sent out by the American Federation of Labor, so that during the winter of 1900-01 the working people of the city seemed to have succumbed to a perfect fever for "unionizing." By spring all the laborers in some of the mechanical trades and over fifty per cent in most of the others were embraced in the unions. "It can be safely stated," said the secretary of the San Francisco Labor Council, "that the affiliated unions control eighty-five per cent of the workers in their respective trades." But the process of "unionizing" did not end with the organization of the laborers into trades unions: the separate unions proceeded to establish close relations with one another by acquiring membership in the central bodies that already existed in the city. Of these bodies the most powerful is the San Francisco Labor Council, and it was with this that most of the unions became affiliated, so that during the strike of last summer it came to embrace no less than ninety-eight unions, with an estimated membership of thirty thousand laborers.

Through this federating process the power of the unions for weal or for woe was vastly enhanced. Many, however, of the older organizations were inclined to look askance at the admission to the council of the newly organized unions. It was feared that their inexperience might lead to a misuse of the influence their numbers would confer, that consciousness of strength would tempt them to actions through which the industrial peace then prevailing might be disturbed. In March *Organized Labor*, the official newspaper of the State Federation, urged the "unionizers" to make haste slowly, saying:

Our faithful and energetic organizers are to be commended for their untiring and self-sacrificing work, but we believe that at this time a word of warning is not out of place. . . . It is with a sad heart we behold the embryo labor union tumble out of its cradle and make an endeavor to carry away the earth and the planets on top of it. . . . San Francisco has experienced a union Pentecost breeze; the air is charged with union electricity, but beware of the storm. . . . May the Council and the older organizations realize their grave responsibility that labor's cause may not suffer.

In June it had occasion to lament that this advice was not taken. On the contrary,

the professional Organizer doubled his efforts and the Labor Council increased its Organizing Committee. Unions were formed; that is, very few of them were trades unions, but there were many, very many unions of divers occupations and callings. Charters were sent for, framed, and hung in the meeting halls until they covered the four walls. . . . The Labor Council gathered under its wings a most varied collection of eggs and hatched some curious ducklings and labelled them trades unions. . . . The old and staunch trades unions tried to stem the current by passing a law to the effect that no new union should go on strike before it had been organized and a member of the Council for at least six months. This sensible provision, however, failed to pass.

And if experienced "unionists" feared the blasts of this "Pentecost breeze," what must have been the anxiety of the employers? Why, it began to be asked, has this movement assumed so furious a pace in recent months? During the industrial depression when the laborers really needed help and should have stood shoulder to shoulder to render mutual assistance, many even of the old unions went to pieces. At present, according to their own confession through the Labor Bureau, their condition has been already greatly ameliorated. Wages are as high and hours as short as anywhere else in the world. And yet they are organizing at a rate that the city has never known before. What further do the unions propose to accomplish?

For an answer to these questions the employers did not have long to wait. The purpose of the movement was afterwards thus concisely stated by the *Coast Seamen's Journal*:

In the early part of the present year the growth of organization among the workers of the city had proceeded sufficiently to justify a movement for the establishment of better conditions in many trades. Consequently a number of organizations in the Labor Council, acting with the advice and endorsement of that body, submitted proposals to the employers in the different trades looking mainly to the reduction of hours and the improvement of working rules. In some cases an increase of wages was asked, but these were comparatively few. As a result many unions gained substantial advantages. . . . With few exceptions the improvements asked were willingly conceded.

Among the unions thus gaining advantages the *Journal* enumerates no less than twenty-one. It seemed obvious then that the purpose of the movement was to force concessions from the employers. In April this had become so apparent that measures were taken to countervail the growing power of the unions. To this end nearly all of the wholesale merchants and manufacturers, together with many of the larger retail merchants, united in a secret organization which they called the Employers' Association. This body stated in its published declaration of principles that

its policy is not dictated by a spirit of aggression, but it shall be the earnest endeavor of its members to prevent friction and to peacefully settle all disputes that may arise between employer and employee. We believe that the frequent strikes and boycotts which, in the absence of any effective restraining power, have prevailed in this community and may hereafter prevail, are dangerous to its industries; and this Association of Employers is formed to check these growing evils.

The most significant provisions of its by-laws are found in Article VIII:

That in case of a strike or boycott in any of the different industries represented in this Association it shall be the duty of the Executive Committee to investigate the trouble, to act as, or appoint, an arbitration committee in its discretion, and to recommend such means to end the strike or boycott as it may deem advisable. All differences and disputes between members of the Association and any labor union, and any and all demands of any labor union against

any member of this Association shall be immediately referred to the Executive Committee or to the Secretary of the Association, *and no settlement or adjustment of such differences, disputes, or demands, shall be made save by and with the consent of the Executive Committee and in accordance with its instructions.* Nothing contained in this article shall be construed as applying to cases of differences, demands, or disputes between members of this Association and their employees as individuals.

The list of members and the names of officers, directors and executive committee were carefully concealed. All communications with the newspapers, the municipal authorities or the public at large were to be held only through the Association's attorney. There were numerous reasons for maintaining such secrecy. Perhaps the most potent lay in the fact that some of the members of such an organization would be far more exposed than others to boycotts and other hostile operations of the trades unions, and secrecy seemed to be the easiest way to equalize the risk. In addition to this, it was felt that participation in the work of such a body would be fatal to all political aspirations in a community where the labor vote is powerful and discriminating. Some, therefore, whose coöperation was necessary might refrain from joining, and at best discussion must be far from free unless the proceedings of the Association were kept secret. Finally, it was realized that a main essential to the success of the organization lay in harmony and united action on the part of the men who composed it. Under the most favorable circumstances this would be difficult to maintain in a body where such diverse and indeed conflicting interests were represented. It was deemed wise, therefore, to check so far as possible the disintegrating influences that might be brought to bear from without, by concealing the names of the members as well as the plans of the directors.

Both sides being thus drawn up in battle array, it was impossible that the conflict should be long postponed. Indeed, even before the Employers' Association had been effectively organized, coming events had cast their shadows before. Several of

the unions had put forward as their chief demand, not that wages be increased nor that hours be shortened, but that the employers should "unionize" their shops; that is, they should employ no workmen who were not members of a trades union. In the case of one of these unions, the metal polishers, the demand was refused and the men struck. They were followed on May the first by the cooks and waiters, and a few days later there occurred a sympathetic strike of the bakers. The demands of the cooks and waiters were to the effect that all restaurant keepers should pay a rate of wages fixed by the union, that hours should be materially shortened, and that one day a week should be allowed as a holiday. In addition, each employer was required to agree not to hire non-union men, and to expose in his window a card signifying his accession to these demands. There is in San Francisco in proportion to the population a singularly large number of restaurants and eating houses. These differ greatly in size and equipment. Most of them are cheap places where the employer ekes out his profits by laboring along with two or three employees, while some are handsome and elaborate establishments, employing ten times as many men as the small places and representing a large investment of capital. Naturally, the requirements made of the employees, the remuneration they receive and the conditions under which they work likewise vary. The lot of many of them is indeed exceedingly hard — long hours, monotonous and unpleasant work, little holiday and meagre pay. But in the better restaurants the work is cleaner and more regular, the patrons are pleasant to serve, and the wages and "tips" reach from \$75 to \$130 a month. Now it is very significant that within a few weeks after the strike began a reconciliation had been effected between employers and workmen in nearly all the small and worse equipped places, while the struggle still continued against certain restaurants of the better class where the employees had little to complain of. Attention to this fact discloses the most important, indeed the fundamental purpose of the strike, the real goal of the whole labor movement, the matter that was to become the

bone of contention between organized labor and the Employers' Association. Reconciliation with the small proprietors was easy because they could readily promise to employ only union men and to display the union card, whilst the large houses were disinclined to enter into such an agreement. In other words, the laborers of San Francisco had begun a campaign to compel an official recognition of the unions by the employers and so far as possible to force them to "unionize" their shops.

The motive for cherishing this plan was thus explained by the Labor Council on May 11th:

The recognition of the union by the employer to the extent of entering into agreements to employ none but members of the union is absolutely necessary to prevent continual misunderstandings and friction. All that the union means is that all employers in given industries shall pay uniform wages, work their employees certain hours, and hire union men.

The contradiction involved in these two sentences is apparent, for the institution of uniform wages and hours under such diverse conditions as prevail in the San Francisco eating houses must inevitably produce misunderstanding and friction. Nor do the statistics of strikes collected by the United States Commissioner of Labor testify to the prevalence of greater harmony in the strongly organized than in the weakly organized industries. The true motives of the unions, though not so openly expressed, were twofold: first, to enable the laborers by acting as a body to control the employer if at any time they wished either to increase their demands from him or to protect themselves against his aggressions; second, to force all workers into the union by shutting them out from positions so long as they should decline to become members, and thus to prevent them from lowering wages by "cut throat" competition. Evidently it was necessary, if the union was to accomplish the first of these objects, that it should have in each shop a representative empowered to inquire into and pronounce upon the justice of all disputes between employer and workman, and especially to regulate the engagement of new men and the discharge of old

ones. The privilege of doing this was consequently involved in the demand for the "unionizing" of the restaurants.

No sooner was this policy of the Labor Council divulged through the demands of the strikers than the employers realized that it would be the crucial issue of the campaign. Questions of hours and wages, it was said, may be arbitrated or arranged by conference; but the right to employ and discharge whom he would the employer was determined at all hazards to maintain. In justifying their position the employers asserted that the unions in San Francisco are organizations which it is very difficult to hold responsible; their membership, as a rule, is variable; they hold little or no property; and in the event of a breach of contract on their part it is practically impossible to get redress. Furthermore, it was pointed out that the unions, in order to hold their members, had constantly to manifest their usefulness to the workingmen, — a condition which tempted the leaders to continual aggressions on the employers; for it was chiefly in higher wages and shorter hours that the laborers saw their interests. Again, it was said that the control demanded by the unions over the hiring and discharge of workmen and the methods that must be adopted to make that control effective, would not only be irksome, but would seriously impair the employer's freedom in conducting his business. And, lastly, the employers vehemently objected to being used as a cat's-paw by the union leaders to bring the recalcitrant workmen under their domination.

A week after the strike of the cooks and waiters began, the carriage and wagon makers presented similar demands to their employers and with a similar result. The employers next day issued a signed statement to the effect that they did not object to the wages and hours asked for by their workmen, but that they could not accede to the demand that only union men be employed. This increased the number of strikers in the city to about two thousand. The struggle in these industries dragged along without material gain on either side until May 21, when previous events were thrown into the shade and the gravity of the situation was vastly increased by the strike of the

machinists and the sympathizing workmen engaged in the other branches of the iron trades — altogether about seven thousand men. This action, it is true, was not primarily connected with the movement inaugurated by the Labor Council; yet the plan of the council to "unionize" the shops was involved in the machinists' demands, and the addition of so many thousands to the number of men who were ready to lay down their work in support of this plan gave great moral support to the strikers, while it increased the anxiety of employers in all other trades.

Many of the men in the iron trades, however, deprecated the policy of the Labor Council as likely to prejudice their cause. *Organized Labor*, commenting on the situation, said:

Of all who have cause for complaint there is none who can more justly call down the wrath of heaven on the heads of the two men who manipulate the underground wires in the Labor Council than can the machinists and the men engaged in the iron trades. They prepared for their strike for years; gave their employers six months' notice, extended the time for twenty days; and when the time arrived they found their road to success blocked by strikes of the Cooks and Waiters and men from different other callings who had not been organized a year. . . . We believe yet that the machinists will win . . . but if they lose their strike they can thank organizer Pierce for it, whose grandest achievement in San Francisco has been the formation of the Employers' Association.

So great was the agitation in the city over the sudden stop thus put to the iron industry, that attention was diverted from the settlement reached two days later by the carriage and wagon makers. In this the employers justly claimed a victory, for the wages and hours agreed upon had been conceded before the strike began, while recognition of the union was waived by the returning workmen.

A much more serious engagement was fought early in June. Some months earlier the journeymen butchers had drawn up a scale of wages and hours, and the retail meat dealers agreed to adopt it on condition that the journeymen would not require them to display in their windows the union card. To this

condition the journeymen acceded. But some of the retailers, hoping to increase their custom among the working people, voluntarily displayed the card in token that their shops were "unionized"; whereupon it is said that fifty thousand facsimiles of the card were distributed broadcast by the journeymen, and people were advised to help the laborers by purchasing only where the original was displayed. Whether this accusation be true or not, at any rate trade was diverted to the "unionized" shops, and the proprietors of the others lost custom. To suppress such "unfair" competition the aggrieved merchants appealed to the wholesale butchers for assistance. The wholesalers, hearkening to their petition, ordered, under penalty of a refusal of supplies, that all the cards should be taken down; whereupon the journeymen retorted by ordering all the shops to display them. The retailers now found themselves in evil case indeed: if they displayed the card they got no meat to sell; if they suppressed it they got no men to work. Under these circumstances most of them obeyed the wholesalers without hesitation, though a few held out for several days, hoping to discover a source of supplies outside of the city and not unwilling to extend their custom among the working people by such a conspicuous stand in their favor. In less than a week, however, the laborers surrendered. The cause of their defeat was twofold. In the first place, their work required no great technical skill and newcomers from the country might be quickly trained to take their places. In the second place, their union was weakly organized and proved totally unable to control the members. Of the eighteen hundred men that belonged to it only eleven hundred had obeyed the order to lay down their tools, and all of these except one hundred and fifty returned to work before the strike was declared ended.

For a month after this there were no important developments. With excursions and alarums each party had taken position and proclaimed defiance, and the light-armed battalions had met in preliminary passages at arms. There was then a wait to discover the most vulnerable point of attack, each side hoping that some incautious move of the other would afford

a strategic advantage in the conflict to follow. But the early skirmishes were not entirely without result. In all of them the unions had had the worst of it, and the moral effect of this upon the laborers was great. With one exception, however, all the engagements that had thus far taken place had been on a small scale. The exception was the strike of the iron workers, and in this case, though the shops had already secured enough outsiders to do the urgent work of the port, the men were still hopeful and determined, and, obedient to their national leaders, stood firm as a stone wall. To the labor leaders this attitude was the most cheering feature of the situation. Some additional consolation was found in the fact that all the unions which had suffered defeat were new, inexperienced and loosely organized. It was only a skirmish line of new recruits that had been routed; once let the disciplined host of veterans come into action and the tide of battle would be turned. The prestige of "unionism," however, had suffered. From the over-confidence that had marked the early stages of the movement, there had been a reaction; the new members were beginning to distrust the fair promises of the organizers, and evinced a tremulous fear that the powerful and mysterious Employers' Association had doomed the unions to annihilation. Evidently something must be done to save the situation. Organized labor must show its power. Enough of the disciplined unions must be called out to paralyze the business of the city until the employers should come to terms. The Employers' Association, at the same time, was equally anxious for a decisive conflict. The insecurity of the situation, the vague feeling of uneasiness, the nervous tension of men facing a dubious prospect were more intolerable and exasperating than open hostilities could be. Both sides, therefore, were determined to precipitate a struggle as soon as it could be done without sacrificing any strategic advantage. Under these circumstances the opportunity could not long be delayed. It was afforded by the arrival in the city of the Epworth League, and the struggle was begun by the Brotherhood of Teamsters, one of the most powerful labor organizations in the city.

In September, 1900, the Brotherhood had concluded an agreement with the Draymen's Association, by the terms of which the members of the Association were to employ no teamsters that did not belong to the Brotherhood, whilst the members of the Brotherhood in turn were to work only for the firms that composed the Association. According to the published statements of both sides, this agreement was far from bringing harmony, and the following months were filled with wrangling and disputes. The train was already laid, therefore, for an explosion. Now there is in the city a certain special delivery company, the manager of which has a brother who is an employing drayman and belongs to the Draymen's Association. It was this special delivery company that secured the contract to handle the baggage of the visitors attending the meeting of the Epworth League. The manager of the company, as had been his wont for many years, when he found himself unable to do the work punctually, called upon his brother for assistance. The union officials, however, refused to allow the teamsters to haul the baggage. They said that the special delivery company was not a member of the Draymen's Association, and therefore, by the terms of their agreement, the men could do no work for it. To this it was replied that in hauling the baggage the men would still be working for their present employer, for it was his teams they would use, it was from him they would take orders and receive their wages, and it was to him, and not to the special delivery company, that the profits from their labor would accrue. To the men this seemed a mere splitting of hairs: if the special delivery company had the contract to handle the baggage, whoever hauled it would really be working for that company. But this, the employers urged, was an entirely new and unjust view for the teamsters to take; for many years this company had had work done through members of the Association, and even now the teamsters did not refuse to haul for it anything except this baggage; such inconsistency was hard to understand and could not be tolerated. Furthermore, if the refusal was really based on the agreement with the Association, surely in such a case the

teamsters should not feel bound by it if the employers were unwilling to hold them to it. The Brotherhood, however, denied the logic of this reasoning and persisted in its refusal; whereupon the draymen discharged all the union teamsters and set about finding new men to take their places.

There is perhaps no labor union in the city whose idleness would have been more seriously and widely felt than that of the teamsters. All branches of industry are singularly dependent on the drayage companies in San Francisco for the reason that few of the docks have railroad facilities. For the fruit merchants, moreover, and others that deal in perishable goods it was the busiest season of the year; to them a cessation of traffic meant ruin. Many firms, it is true, employed their own drivers, and were therefore in no way involved in the dispute of the Brotherhood with the Draymen's Association. Even these drivers, however, after a few days were called out by the union officials, so that the business of the city was threatened with complete paralysis. Under the circumstances all men knew that there could be no dallying. In this case the "waiting game" that was being played in the metal trades was impossible; the business men could not afford to suspend operations till the Brotherhood was starved into submission. Naturally, the teamsters felt that they were masters of the situation and believed that many interests would unite in bringing pressure to bear upon the draymen. The Employers' Association, however, to which the draymen resigned the management of the affair, refused even for a moment to consider the question of surrender. On the contrary, every effort was put forth to supply as rapidly as possible the places vacated by the members of the Brotherhood. Some employers themselves mounted the box and drove their own teams. Many succeeded in hiring discharged army teamsters who had recently returned from the Philippines. A large number of men also, tempted by special inducements, came in from the country, especially from the fruit districts, where the producers were vitally interested in having the traffic of the city restored to its normal condition. But the new men, for the most part, were inexperienced; there were frequent blocks

and collisions ; the wagons were often stalled or upset ; and the freight was moved slowly and with great difficulty. Industry soon showed the effects of such inadequate work. The five big box factories of the city were obliged to close down and discharge their workmen. The porters and packers of many firms were turned off because they refused to help non-union drivers load the wagons. All the union beer bottlers were locked out because their officials forbade them to work for employers whose beer was hauled from the dock by non-union drivers. The California Wine Association discharged its coopers, saying there was no work for them as long as teamsters could not be found to haul barrels. The furniture dealers, hardware merchants, indeed all the larger retail houses were greatly hampered by the difficulty of delivering goods to their customers. As the days passed, however, it became evident that the teamsters were the weaker party. The employers were determined to prove themselves once for all masters of the situation, and the powerful and secret association they had formed held all waverers sternly in line and turned a deaf ear to proposals of conciliation. Each day brought in scores of new men from the country, and though at first inexperienced, their duties were easy to learn and they readily acquired sufficient skill to perform them satisfactorily. The situation was growing acute, and the teamsters began to show signs of desperation. Hitherto disturbances of the peace had been conspicuously rare, and on each side there had been nothing but expressions of good will toward individuals on the other. But now violence began to assert itself. The hoots and jeers with which the crowds and idlers had assailed the new drivers began to give way to stone throwing and fisticuffs. There were serious affrays, and the newcomers, terrified, ceased to seek the places of the locked-out teamsters. In this emergency the employers called on the police department and secured a special officer to accompany and protect each non-union driver. It was hoped that this stroke would break the back of union opposition, and that the teamsters must return to work on the employers' terms or see their places filled by new men.

The Labor Council realized the gravity of the situation. The leaders were convinced that now indeed "the fight was on to a finish"; and it could not be doubted what that finish would be if the teamsters were left to their own unaided efforts. The long sought opportunity to display the power of organized labor was now at hand; the issue was found, the fight was begun. It was decided to support the teamsters with all the power that the council could bring into play, and accordingly, on July 30, the fourteen unions composing the City Front Federation, with an estimated membership of sixteen thousand men, declared a strike to last until the Draymen's Association should reinstate their locked-out drivers. This move likewise involved the idleness of the teamsters, the longshoremen, porters, *etc.*, at Oakland across the bay and at Port Costa, the main shipping point for agricultural produce.

It was believed that the Employers' Association would now find itself checkmated. "The trouble cannot last longer than a fortnight," said the organizer of the American Federation, "for something will have to give way." The secretary of the Labor Council, a man of singular skill and long experience in the management of such affairs, is reported to have expressed the opinion that "the whole thing could not have been better" for the unions. The president of the Labor Council said: "We have waited a long time to get things where we could have such an issue as has been made for us. . . . We have things just where we want them."

The next day the shipping in the harbor was almost completely tied up; the vessels were deserted by their sailors and firemen and could neither take on nor discharge cargoes. There was no activity about the wharfs; the street traffic was again almost entirely suspended, and it was estimated that at least sixty per cent of the business of the city was at a standstill. The crowds of strikers along the city front were large and menacing, and in the police department there reigned great anxiety; no man could tell what a few hours would bring forth, and all the riot guns and pistols were brought out, cleaned and oiled. To the credit of the laborers be it said, however, that

this phase of the strike began with the utmost quiet and good order. The attacks on non-union drivers were, indeed, not entirely suspended, but for several days they were less violent and less numerous than they had been before the City Front Federation entered the conflict.

Numerous and strenuous efforts to effect a reconciliation had already been made both by individuals and by organizations. But the men active in this work had found it impossible to induce the Employers' Association even to consider their proposals. To the labor leaders there had been ready access and the terms of settlement had been freely discussed with them. But the Employers' Association could be approached only through its attorney, and the invariable reply he returned to all suggestions was that the employers saw nothing to confer about, that nothing was demanded which they could even consider. There was no question of wages or hours involved in the union demands; the only point at issue was whether the employer should manage his own affairs or surrender control of them to his workmen. Such a surrender would be involved in an agreement to employ none but union men, and this matter, therefore, the Employers' Association was determined not to concede, to compromise or to arbitrate. When the City Front Federation struck, however, the mayor of the city, undeterred by the cold reception accorded all previous attempts at mediation, requested from each side a statement of its position with a view to reconciling differences. The replies he received clearly set forth the nature of the trouble.

The unions submitted to him the form of an agreement which he was empowered to propose to the Employers' Association. It was to the effect that the Association should concede the right of the laborers to organize, that it should not discriminate against an employer who chose to hire only union men, nor against a workman who belonged to a union, and that all employees who had lost their places on account of the present trouble should be reinstated. Moreover, when any future trouble arose, there should be no strike or lockout till both parties had exhausted all means to settle it peacefully. If

the Association agreed to this, the labor unions in their turn would promise that the workmen would obey all orders of their employers relating to the work they were hired to perform. The employers on their side replied through their attorney that they did not believe the proposed agreement could be maintained and adequately enforced by the unions. They added, however, that they were willing to recommend that employers should fill all vacancies in their shops without asking whether the applicant belonged to a union or not, on condition that the employee should obey all lawful orders, that he should not try to compel his fellow-workmen to join a union nor his employer to hire only union men, and that he should promise not to engage in nor support a sympathetic strike or boycott. To this the attorney added a note setting forth the position of the Employers' Association toward labor unions: first, the Association recognizes the right of laborers to organize in order to ameliorate their condition; second, it has not discriminated against union men nor will it do so; third, it has not discriminated against an employer hiring only union men nor will it do so; fourth, when differences arise they must be left to be settled by the employer and his own workmen without interference from the officers or members of the labor unions. The Federation promptly rejected these terms of the Association. It was urged that a promise to recognize the right of laborers to organize and yet deny the right of the officers and union members to mediate when trouble arose, was merely "indulging the laborers in an abstraction." The *Coast Seamen's Journal* asserted that "the statement that the Association does not interfere with the right of employees to belong to a labor organization is a lie." The chief spokesman of the Labor Council considered the reply of the Association as "full of premeditated insults and deliberate falsehoods."

After this no serious consideration seems to have been given by either party to the conciliatory proposals of outsiders. A number of citizens, cherishing public-spirited but somewhat Quixotic intentions, continued to urge upon the leaders their opinions of how the struggle might be ended, but though they

were sometimes listened to with polite toleration, they were as often rebuffed without even being heard. Eventually the Employers' Association absolutely declined to consider any propositions coming from disinterested parties, and through its attorney requested that no further negotiations or mediation be offered by any one. By such severity it undoubtedly injured its cause in the eyes of the public. It was widely believed that if a conference could be arranged between the executive committee and the labor leaders a settlement would not be difficult. Its stern reserve gave color to the complaints of the workmen that the employers were intolerant, arrogant and tyrannical. When the Board of Supervisors met, a special committee was appointed to investigate the situation and recommend measures for ending the trouble. The committee wrote to the Employers' Association and urged that a conference be held. "We do not ask you to pledge yourselves in any way, merely to meet the men and hear their side. We believe that public sentiment is crystallizing against your organization and we point to that to convince you that your course is wrong." The Association replied: "The principle involved in this strike may be surrendered but it cannot be compromised, and a surrender of it would be the beginning of the end of San Francisco's industrial welfare." Such being the issue, "a conference would be entirely futile and barren of results. It could only inspire in the strikers delusive hopes of a settlement on their terms, and thus lead them to prolong the struggle. We approve of conferences between individual employers and their own employees as the only legitimate way to settle differences."

It would be tedious to describe in detail the struggle that followed. It soon became apparent that predictions of an early end of the strike would be falsified. Many of the men, therefore, left the city and sought work elsewhere at whatever wages they could get. This displaced the agricultural laborers, who began to make their way to the city and take the positions vacated by the strikers. This movement the employers naturally exerted themselves to encourage. Agents were sent to the country to hunt up able-bodied men, and advertisements

were inserted in the papers of inland and eastern cities, offering special inducements to experienced workmen. The recruiting process, however, was very slow. Even in normal times labor is scarce and dear in California, especially in summer, while distance renders it almost impossible to draw upon the supply that otherwise might be available in the Middle West. The Labor Council, moreover, put forth every effort to keep men away. Circulars were distributed broadcast through the country, explaining the situation and requesting laborers not to come to San Francisco. Groups of workmen arriving by rail were met hours before they reached their destination by determined men who were willing to use extreme measures to turn them from their course. Several times, when persuasion failed, there were serious affrays on the trains or at the ferry building, with the result that the stream of newcomers flowed in a slow and most uncertain current.

Meantime the farmers were beginning to feel acutely the disastrous effects of the strike. Owing to the dry summers in California little preparation is made to protect the harvested wheat from the rains. The greater part of the crop after it has been sacked is sent to the huge warehouses at Port Costa, and as rapidly as possible transferred from there to shipboard. But as the strike had extended to Port Costa, enough men could not be secured to load the ships there, so that the warehouses became congested and much of the wheat could not be housed. The employers claimed that plenty of laborers might be had were it not that the strikers terrorized them and by threats of violence prevented them from working. On that ground the State Board of Trade wrote to the governor, explaining the situation and stating that, if the workmen were protected, the grain crop could be readily handled. The governor treated this as an application that the militia be called out, which he considered the demand of a faction based upon statements that could not be verified. Thereupon a convention of farmers, meeting at Sacramento, appointed a committee to investigate the situation and to suggest the proper measures for the wheat growers to take. This committee

visited Port Costa and interviewed the leaders on each side both there and in the city. It then reported that violence and intimidation alone kept laborers from going to work, and recommended that armed men be sent by the farmers to maintain the peace and thus prevent great loss. "We believe," said the committee, "that the position taken and maintained by the Employers' Association is reasonable and justifiable. . . . The demands of the strikers are so unreasonable that they cannot and will not be acceded to."

In the city, as the weeks passed by, it grew more and more evident that the strikers were losing ground. The managers of the great shops in the iron industry had provided against trouble by inserting a "strike clause" in all their contracts, and therefore could afford to wait. By the enforced idleness they might indeed be losing profits, but, as they explained with whimsical stoicism, they might also be avoiding losses. Slowly and unsteadily, but none the less surely, the employers in other branches were recruiting their forces of workmen from without, so that by the 20th of September the water front presented a normal picture of busy industry. The labor leaders claimed that there was much stage thunder in the comings and goings of the wagons, in the noisy bustle and the perspiring activity about the wharfs; and indeed it is likely that these things were exaggerated somewhat by the employers for the purpose of discouraging the strikers. But for all that, the plethora of the warehouses was relieved, the clearances of vessels increased, the supply of coal was fairly sufficient and goods were delivered about the city without great delay.

In the meantime the unions were discussing another means of accomplishing their ends. As early as the middle of August it was freely said amongst the working people that it was through the suffrage that the laborer should hope to secure his rights. "If the strike lasts long," said a prominent unionist, "the men will take part in politics and work changes in the city government." The secretary of the machinists' union affirmed that already the movement was being thoroughly organized and that there would certainly be a labor ticket in

the municipal campaign. "This is just the beginning," he continued, "for we are determined that the workingmen shall run this government." How successfully in the following autumn this movement was carried out is now known all over the United States.

Doubtful prospects of future political triumphs, however, could ill console the men who saw their places taken under their very noses by "scabs" that seemed to creep out of the highways and hedges and sneaked into the city in spite of the pickets, outposts and vigilance of the unions. Assaults upon non-union laborers, therefore, became increasingly frequent and violent. The majority of the strikers no doubt heartily deprecated such actions, and the leaders urged the men to maintain peace and good order, warning them repeatedly that nothing could so weaken their cause as violence. But unruly spirits were not always to be held in check, and the disorder was increased by ruffians and desperadoes that took advantage of the prevailing conditions to ply their trade of robbery and pillage. In the numerous affrays that occurred some lives were lost, and many men were crippled and rendered incompetent for life. The police force was greatly increased, and many of the employers hired guards and private detectives for protection. When the officers were removed from the drays and wagons by reason of the increasing need for their services on the streets, the draymen employed discharged soldiers to take their places and had them sworn in as special officers. The laborers complained that it was gross injustice that the police should be used for the especial protection of the employers and should display their activity in suppressing the union pickets and clearing the strikers from the streets. Their hostility to the authorities was kindled to fury by the wordy eloquence of a certain Roman Catholic priest, who affirmed that it was not the rich but the laborers who paid the taxes, and that it was, therefore, a "crying shame" that the policemen should be turned out as "guardian angels" of the employers. "If when this strike began," he asserted, "the government of this city had acted in justice, and had not thrown its power against the strikers, the

strike would have been settled long ago." Such expressions seemed to justify the practices of the more turbulent element among the idle men, and bloodshed, burglary and lawlessness in all its forms threatened to pass out of the control of the labor leaders and police officers alike. The climax was reached on the night of September 28, when a small body of special officers, afterwards aided by the regular police, was attacked by an armed mob on the chief business street of the city. A pitched battle ensued, and a number of the participants were shot before the mob was routed by the arrival of reinforcements to the other side. After this the nervous anxiety developed into a veritable reign of terror. The Employers' Association started a fund of \$200,000 to enable the police commission to increase the force. Houses were barricaded and old weapons that had long done service as ornaments or heirlooms were polished up and made ready for action. Men stayed at home by night and walked the streets heavily armed by day. Demands for the military became loud and clamorous, and wild and foolish talk of a plan among the strikers to sack the city rendered the timid almost speechless with fear.

By this time, however, all signs except the bold bearing of the union leaders indicated to unprejudiced eyes that the struggle was nearing its end, and that the strike had failed. The savings accumulated by the unionists during the years of prosperity were insufficient for a further continuance of idleness, and appeals for aid had long since been found necessary. In Oakland the sympathetic strike had been declared off and the men were again at work. At Port Costa the energy of the farmers was replacing the strikers with a complete force of new men. Even in the city the multitude of policemen and the anxiety of property owners were almost the only visible signs that the strike was still in progress.

On the 2d of October the governor of the state suddenly appeared in the city, saying he had been invited by those most interested to do what he could to bring the struggle to an end. He sent quietly and requested the president, manager and

executive council of the Draymen's Association to meet him for a conference. On their arrival they found with him the leaders of the Brotherhood of Teamsters and of the City Front Federation; the governor contrived that they should all be closeted together, and the result was that in less than an hour the terms of settlement between the Brotherhood of Teamsters and the Draymen's Association had been arranged. The next day the strike was declared at an end, the men applied for their former positions, the special policemen were discharged and without a trace of friction quiet was restored.

The terms of settlement were never given to the public, but all the available evidence goes to show that the real purpose of the labor movement was not accomplished. The employers claimed that their victory was complete and unconditional. The labor leaders asserted with equal emphasis that the matter at issue was compromised. A study of the subsequent situation, however, fails to show that the unions gained anything that was not conceded in the ultimatum published by the Employers' Association when first the City Front Federation ceased to work. The underlying motive of the men who planned the campaign had been, as we have seen, the desire to have all shops "unionized" — to exclude from employment all non-union men. Their power to accomplish this had been brought to the crucial test when the teamsters opened hostilities against the special delivery company. Instead, however, of succeeding in this test case, they saw the way open at the end of the strike to the employment of non-union drivers even where they had been previously excluded. For those of the "scab" teamsters that wished to remain were not discharged when the strikers returned to their employers, and the members of the Brotherhood found themselves obliged to work side by side with non-union men.

The cause of the failure is sufficiently obvious. It lay in the fact that the unions did not control a large enough proportion of the available labor force effectively to scotch the wheels of industry. If the hauling and other work done by the City Front Federation had really ceased for a considerable time, the employers must inevitably have been beaten; for this work was

absolutely necessary to the welfare and even to the existence of the whole community. When they struck, the unions believed that the work would cease. Their control over the men at that time engaged in the performance of it seems to have been absolute. But they underestimated the potential labor supply over which they had no control whatever. It is true that in the state as a whole the labor supply is scanty, but it is singularly intelligent and adaptable, and is readily transferred therefore to the section and into the occupation where demand is strongest. Unfortunately for their plans, the work of those unions whose labor was indispensable required no high degree of skill and newcomers were rapidly broken in to perform it, while in the case of the machinists and other technical trades the employers were in a position to wait indefinitely.

As to the merits of the point really at issue, — the exclusion of non-union laborers from employment, — men are now and probably always will be disagreed. If labor organizations are to be effective, it would seem, to judge from the movement we have described, that they must embrace practically the whole labor supply; and yet compulsory membership is certainly opposed to the spirit of American institutions, while the demand that employers should assist in exercising this compulsion by refusing employment to non-union workmen seems utterly exorbitant.

In conclusion it may be remarked that nowhere is the divergence of opinions on this matter more noticeable than in the decisions of the courts. In Great Britain the justice of a threat to strike rather than work with non-union men was upheld in 1898 in a very memorable case by the House of Lords, the highest judicial authority of the realm. The authority of this precedent was specifically denied in 1899 by the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, and the doctrine it embodies has been repudiated in a large majority of the cases decided in American courts. The British decision has been quoted with approval, however, and several times followed by the Supreme Court of New York, while the principle has been consistently maintained by the highest courts of Indiana and New Jersey.